

# THE PM/ACQUISITION COMMAND SELECTION PROCESS

## Introduction

Does it seem to you like the command selection process is all done with “smoke and mirrors?” If so, read on to find out how the Army selects the “best-qualified individuals” and places them in centrally managed command positions. Simply stated, the Army uses the Command Selection process to select individuals to serve in “command positions.” These positions represent all LTC/GS-14 (or equivalent) and COL/GS-15 (or equivalent) product/project manager (PM) and acquisition commander positions.

The purpose of this article is to describe to the Army’s Acquisition Workforce the Acquisition Command Selection board process and the decision tools used to identify the best-qualified individuals, illustrate how the best-qualified methodology is applied to the selection board process, and provide information on how best to prepare your file for the board.

## Selection Board Process

The selection of best-qualified individuals to fill command positions is based on statutory requirements stipulated in the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA). Because of the scope of responsibilities and importance of these positions, the Army Chief of Staff Command Selection List (CSL) board process is used to select the best-qualified individuals. The Secretary of the Army is the convening authority for acquisition command selection boards.

The process begins with the General Officer Steering Committee (GOSC). The GOSC, whose members represent a broad range of diverse acquisition commands, determines which command positions are to be filled by individuals selected by the

---

Gail L. DiNicolantonio and  
MAJ Brian C. Winters

---

CSL process. Potential command positions are submitted by acquisition major Army Commands (MACOMs) and are projected for up to 3 years in the future. The committee also designates “military-unique” positions and those positions that are “best qualified” (i.e., open to either military or civilian applicants). Positions will be filled by the best-qualified individual unless the MACOM can justify that the duties of the position require the unique skills of a military officer. The Army Acquisition Executive approves GOSC recommendations. Once this occurs, an acquisition CLS is established.

The next step in the process is establishing the list of individuals who will compete for the available command positions. The initial phase of this process differs slightly for military and civilian applicants. Military officers eligible to compete are automatically considered unless they formally decline. Eligible civilians interested in competing for these positions must submit an application in accordance with announcement instructions posted on the U.S. Total Army Personnel Command’s (PERSCOM’s) Web site. Once civilian applications are received and military officers choosing to compete are identified, a common process for both military officers and civilians is implemented.

## Board Files

A board file is compiled for every individual competing for command posi-

tions. Acquisition Career Managers (ACMs) in PERSCOM’s Acquisition Management Branch (AMB) personally review every file to ensure that it is complete, accurate, and best reflects the individual’s career. This is an important, time-consuming task. ACMs spend many hours preparing files for a board and, if discrepancies are found, the applicant is asked to correct them.

Civilian board files are comprised of the Acquisition Career Record Brief (ACRB), a Civilian Qualification Record (DA Form 2302-R), and microfiche that contain the applicant’s last six performance appraisals and Senior Rater Potential Evaluations (SRPEs). Other items submitted with the application, such as the mobility statement, tenure agreement, and SF-50, are retained in the file but not sent to the board. Military board files are comprised of an official photograph, the Officer Record Brief (ORB), and microfiche that contain the officer’s evaluation reports and military awards.

During the civilian file scrub, the first item checked is the ACRB, a one-page document containing critical information that, if completed correctly, paints a complete picture of an individual’s career. The ACRB is very similar to a military officer’s ORB. A common problem in the past has been inconsistent information (specifically, education and assignment history) on the ACRB and the DA Form 2302-R. This causes confusion to board members and questions the validity or credibility of the board file.

Prior to producing microfiche for civilian applicants, ACMs verify that the latest performance report is dated within the last 15 months. The six appraisals are reviewed to ensure that there are no gaps in performance periods. If there are, the applicant will be asked to provide

rationale for the missing report or to account for the period not rated. ACMs also verify that the senior rater who signed the SRPE is the same one who signed the last performance appraisal. If there is a difference, the senior rater will be contacted for verification. ACMs review microfiche once they are produced to ensure they contain the correct reports on each individual and that the documents are legible and in chronological sequence.

During the military file review, the first item checked is the official photo. Does it belong to the officer, is it a good quality photo, and is it current? Next, the ORB is checked to ensure that education levels are correct, there is a recent physical examination annotated, and the current duty title is accurate and understandable by board members. Finally, the individual's microfiche are reviewed. Are all documents on the fiche in chronological order and legible? Are any documents missing or duplicated? Do all documents belong to the officer and does the information on the fiche match the information on the ORB?

## Board Members

The selection board is comprised of Army Acquisition Corps members who have demonstrated outstanding performance in challenging assignments and who represent various functional area specialties and major commands. By statute, the board must have five or more members and all must be a higher grade or rank than those being considered. Additionally, members must not have served on the previous Acquisition Command Selection board. Policy requires members to possess a variety of acquisition skills and to be currently serving, or previously served, as CSL commanders. Policy also requires ethnic and female representation and that military members be graduates of the Command and General Staff College (LTC/GS-14 level boards) and/or Senior Staff College (COL/GS-15 level boards). Potential board members are nominated by AMB, but are selected by the Army Secretariat, the organization that conducts central selection boards on behalf of the Secretary of the Army.

## Guidance And Regulations

The Secretary of the Army provides guidance to the board by means of a Memorandum of Instruction (MOI). The MOI is the only written guidance provided to board members and includes directions regarding equal opportunity, the minimum and maximum number of individuals to be selected, and any special requirements needed for the positions being filled. The actual MOI is published with the board results.

Communication with the board is limited to written correspondence from the individual under consideration and is governed by Army Regulation (AR) 600-8-29, paragraph 1-33.C.3. The AR states that no one may appear before the board in person and that no one may criticize or reflect on the character, conduct, or motives of any applicant under consideration. Letters by third parties may not be forwarded to the board unless endorsed by the applicant. Additionally, sending a letter to a selection board is an individual decision and should be made only after careful consideration and advice from an applicant's ACM.

## Conduct Of The Board

Board members use the MOI, the person's board file, and their own experience and judgement to paint a word picture of the applicant. The word picture is then converted to a numerical score or vote. The vote of each board member is recorded on a "blind-vote" card. This blind-vote card protects the privacy of each vote by ensuring that board members cannot see the votes of others. Based on the votes of all members, Relative Standing Lists (RSLs) are produced. There is one RSL for principals selected and one for alternates.

When the board adjourns, AMB receives the RSL and prepares the slate. ACMs in AMB identify the requirements for each position to be filled, analyze the qualifications of selected individuals, and put "the right person in the right position" to best meet the needs of the Army, while addressing the needs of the individual. Once the slate is completed, it is briefed through the chain of command at

PERSCOM. It is also briefed to the Military Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology; the Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel; the Army Vice Chief of Staff; and to the Army Chief of Staff. When the slate is approved by the Army Chief of Staff, it is released to the MACOMs for review. The MACOMs have approximately 2 weeks to review the slate and, if desired, submit proposed changes (within their command *only*). After this process is complete, the slate is released to the field.

After AMB receives board results, the ACMs compare the files of those selected against those not selected to identify possible discriminators and perform a trend analysis. Board members do not out-brief ACMs on the board results. There is no sharing of personal knowledge, nor is there "social re-engineering" of the board results to meet quotas. The board process is a tried-and-proven one that has shown to be inherently fair to all applicants.

## Conclusion

If you are considering applying to the Acquisition Command Selection board, we highly recommend contacting your ACM to review your file well in advance of the application deadline. This allows sufficient time to incorporate any needed changes to ensure that your board file is complete. The ACM review will help you prepare a competitive package that accurately reflects your accomplishments and your career.

---

*GAIL L. DINICOLANTONIO is an ACM in PERSCOM's AMB. She has an undergraduate degree in business administration from George Mason University and an executive M.S. in science and technology commercialization from the University of Texas at Austin.*

*MAJ BRIAN C. WINTERS is an ACM in PERSCOM's AMB. He has an M.S. in transportation engineering from the University of Washington.*

---